

Today the Church celebrates the **Feast of the Presentation of the Lord** which occurs forty days after the birth of Jesus and is also known as Candlemas Day, since the blessing and procession of candles could be included in today's liturgy. The previous (1962) liturgical calendar refers to this feast as the "Purification of Mary." This is known as a "Christmas feast" since it points back to the Solemnity of Christmas. Many Catholics practice the tradition of keeping out the Nativity creche or other Christmas decorations until this feast day.

The feast was first observed in the Eastern Church as "The Encounter." In the sixth century, it began to be observed in the West: in Rome with a more penitential character and in Gaul (France) with solemn blessings and processions of candles, popularly known as "Candlemas." The Presentation of the Lord concludes the celebration of the Nativity and with the offerings of the Virgin Mother and the prophecy of Simeon, the events now point toward Easter.

"In obedience to the Old Law, the Lord Jesus, the first-born, was presented in the Temple by his Blessed Mother and his foster father. This is another 'epiphany' celebration insofar as the Christ Child is revealed as the Messiah through the canticle and words of Simeon and the testimony of Anna the prophetess. Christ is the light of the nations, hence the blessing and procession of candles on this day. In the Middle Ages this feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, or 'Candlemas,' was of great importance.

"The specific liturgy of this Candlemas feast, the blessing of candles, is not as widely celebrated as it should be, except of course whenever February 2 falls on a Sunday and thus takes precedence. There are two ways of celebrating the ceremony, either the *Procession*, which begins at a 'gathering place' outside the church, or the *Solemn Entrance*, celebrated within the church."

—From *Ceremonies of the Liturgical Year*

The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord's second major theme is Light. We are well familiar with the beautiful symbolism associated with light. Light means Christ and the supernatural life of grace. Today the Church, responding to Simeon's words, "The Light for the enlightenment of the Gentiles," keeps a genuine "light feast." (The feast was instituted to supplant the pagan *Lupercalia*, a licentious frolic featuring nocturnal torchlight parades. This explains why at the blessing of the candles and in the procession the celebrant and his ministers used to wear violet, the penitential color.)



Candles are blessed for liturgical use and were distributed to the faithful. In homes they should be lighted on the occasion of family devotions, in times of storm, household crises, or other dangers; also at the Communion of the sick and at the administration of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. The Church, moreover, wishes these candles to remind us of our baptismal candles; for the candles we held at baptism signified our heavenly adoption and our duties in the lay priesthood of Christ. Year after year we received a baptismal candle so that "with burning lamp" we may hasten to meet the Bridegroom when He comes for the heavenly nuptials.

In the older missal, on two occasions during this day's Mass, the faithful would light their candles and hold them, at the Gospel and during the Canon until Communion. For in the Gospel and during the Canon Christ is present in a special way. It is the reason why at a High Mass lighted candles and burning incense are introduced. The message which the Church wishes to tell you is this: Actually, you ought to hold burning candles in your hands at every Mass; ordinarily, however, acolytes perform that function in your stead. This feast, however, the lay people had an opportunity to exercise the office of universal or lay priesthood.—Today's Mass, therefore, is truly a "Candle-Mass," practically the only in the entire year.

—Excerpted from *The Church's Year of Grace*, by Pius Parsch



being a Christian has been a challenge in every age of the Church. This happens because what the Church believes about God and salvation is almost never in concert with how a society or its culture understands itself, let alone how it may (or may not) address such things as life after death or eternity. These, of course, are not the only things we believe; but they are vital to understanding almost everything that we do believe as well as how we live the Catholic-Christian Faith.

Yet, in every age, Christians believe they have a responsibility to be the best disciple of their Lord and Savior as they can be. They may not be perfect (even the saints were not perfect), but all Christians are called to holiness. This remains central to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council of the mid-1960s because holiness is an integral part of what it means to have received the Sacrament of Baptism.

The Disciple Maker Index allows you to assess how you may be doing both in your discipleship of Christ as well as in your spiritual growth. By doing this assessment in the survey like Disciple Maker Index, it gives the leadership of your parish valuable insights into discovering ways that we can use to help make you, our parishioners, better Christian disciples. This, in turn, can assist you in finding the joy of being a Catholic-Christian which may help others to discover their faith in God, too.

The Disciple Maker Index survey is now live. You can click the link below to participate. All your responses are completely confidential. No member of the Cathedral staff or our leadership team will ever have access to your individual answers.

Together we must embrace Christ's vision for missionary discipleship so our parish can thrive and be a place for others to grow together in faith.

Please continue to pray for this intention and for the growth and protection of our parish.

I love this line from the Second Reading from Peter – “Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope.” (1 Pt 3:15) It assumes so many important things about our discipleship that I think are particularly important for us to remember today in each and every one of our lives. I love this passage because number one - it assumes we have hope. A prerequisite for discipleship is that ultimately, disciples are people of hope. We believe in the resurrection, and we believe that we are on a journey to God the Father with God the Son walking alongside us. I also love this passage because number two - it assumes our hope is so visible, so apparent to others that they are compelled to ask what the reason for our hope is.

With all of our strengths and opportunities as a parish, I take most comfort and have great hope in the words we have from John's Gospel. “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me, because I live and you will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him.” (John 14:18-21)